23: Franck--261-262 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 349, 491

"There were many long thatch-roofed bridges, some of them curved, some with sharp angles, bridges of timbers and rough-hewn planks evidently cut on the spot, some covered with woven bamboo splints, bridges supported only by the upright trunks of trees along the sides of them, so that even [262] the least nervous of travelers could not but have wondered whether they would always hold the weight our heavy car suddenly put upon them. Many similar bridges had been abandoned and left to disintegrate into the jungle again, because the road had been cut farther back into the hillsides."

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colors are bright and harmonious. It is during these days of rejoicing that the first amorous intrigues often spring up between young people which, generally speaking, end in marriage.

Preparations for the funeral celebration went on, and dusk had not yet fallen when music and singing began to be heard and plates of food were passed around, as well as jars full of rice brandy.

Immediately after the death, men went to the forest to select the dead, but not decaying, tree whose trunk was to serve for making the coffin. Others prepared the pedestal on which it was to be placed and the roof which would surmount it.

The coffin was finally finished. Trapezoidal in shape, with the base uppermost, it rested on a wooden pedestal decorated with carvings. The roof placed above it was copied from the roofs of pagodas. The frame was made of bamboo lattice covered with glued calico, and the whole was ornamented with gold paper cutouts, streamers and multicolored cotton floss.

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[205] The body was sealed in its coffin, where it rested on a bed of aromatic branches and leaves. It was fully dressed and surrounded by bedclothes. A sliding cover was dovetailed into place, and all joints sealed with an indestructible caulking compound made from lime, clay, albumen and paddy husks. [Illustration alongside text here]

The catafalque stood in the middle of the room, one of the walls of which had been removed, as we have seen. It was surrounded by flowers, green branches, lighted candles and stick incense perfumed with powdered benzoin.

In the course of the next four days the province bonzes and officials arrived, and all recited the ritual prayers in Pali around the catafalque without understanding anything of what they said but scrupulously observing the consecrated rhythm and intonation.

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In the meantime a funeral pyre had been built on the sandy bank of the Mékong, left bare by the low waters, using about three [206] steres of dry wood which had been impregnated with resin, wood oil and kerosene.

Solidly held in place at the side by six heavy stakes of green wood, the pyre was surmounted by a high canopy or rectangular pavilion, the roof of which rose in tiers and was covered with flowered cotton cloth and decorated with gold paper garlands, cutouts and many-colored streamers.

This pavilion, supported by four posts decorated in the same taste, would presently serve to shelter the coffin.

149: Reinach--197a G-3 (no date) 1901 AMI Indochina
Laotians AMS

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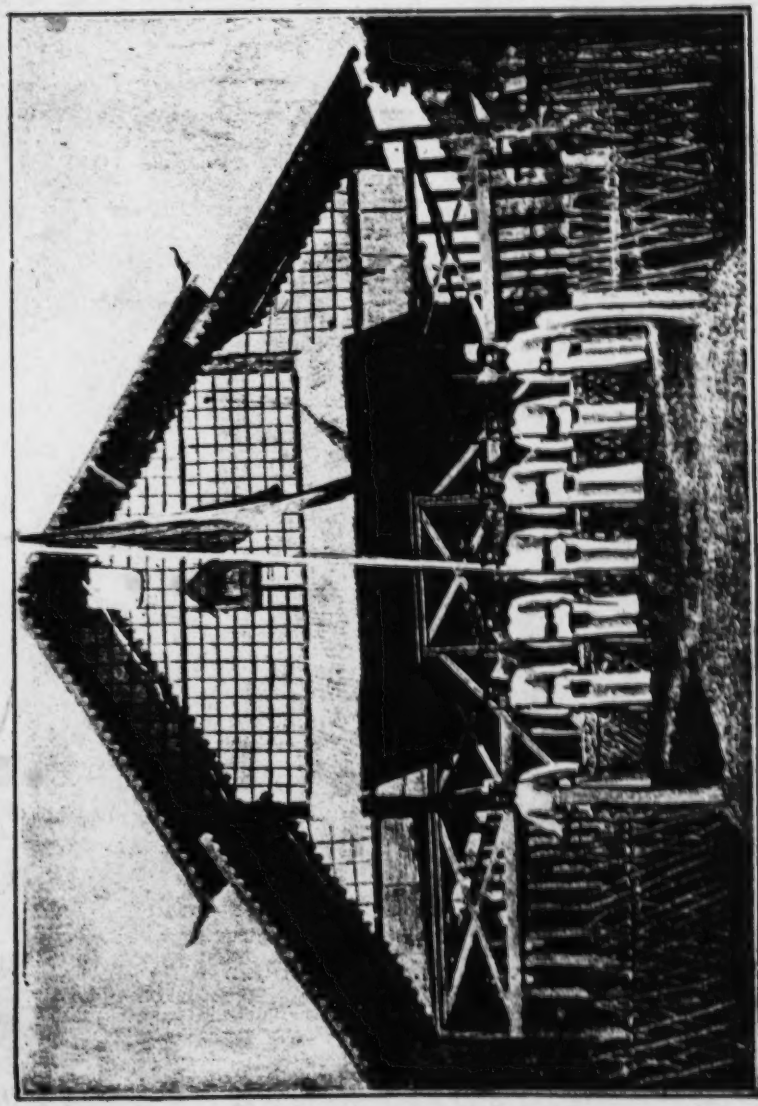

Fig. 75 /p. 279/ Barrack of the militia at Khong.

149: Reinach--28la G-3 (no date) 1901 AM1 Indochina
Laotians AM8

Fig. 96 /p.385/ A house of the "Phis."